



COVER STORY: Q&A WITH PROF SANDY COOK



Our Senior Associate Dean for Education, Prof Sandy Cook retired after spending 16 years with the school. The Student Affairs and Alumni Relations team with input from the greater Office of Education organised a farewell event for Sandy which was well attended by faculties, students, alumni and staff and even ex-staffs. We also took the chance to do a Q&A with Sandy about her thoughts on her time in Singapore. Some of the questions were posed by the AR team, and others were submitted by alumni.

·What made you decide to join Duke-NUS in the beginning?

This is an interesting question. There were many factors, but I'll describe two. The first reason was that I had been working at University of Chicago for 19 years, my children "left the nest", so I was open to exploring new adventures. I had been looking for new opportunities when Colleen O'Conner, the Associate Dean for Curriculum at Duke, who I knew from various professional organizations asked me if I might consider this opportunity. I checked with my kids and my parents, my boyfriend, and they were so very excited for me. With their blessing, I submitted my application.

The second reason was rather serendipitous. The week I came to Singapore for the interview was the same time that Frank Starmer, our first IT director came out to interview as well – January 2006. He had many years of experience in international living for advice, but probably more important was his childlike enthusiasm for this opportunity and was so fun to discuss creative ideas about how we would make this opportunity work. With him and Bob Kamei – I thought this would be an amazing team to work with and so much fun to build something from scratch and with the opportunity to address challenges I knew typical medical schools faced and to explore an innovative learning strategy (TeamLEAD). I have no regrets for this decision.

Q&A WITH PROF SANDY COOK CONT'D

·How have things met or exceeded your expectations? (Posed by an Alumnus)

My time here has more than exceeded my expectations. Beyond having the opportunity to work with some exceedingly creative and fun individuals, I had the opportunity to see the school grow in prestige and impact and it has been so satisfying knowing that I had a small part in setting the school on the path to where it is now and hopefully contributed to the foundation that supports where it is continuing to grow.

I also had the blessing to be able to live in and explore different cultures that I would never have had if I had stayed home. This gave me a more global view of medical education and an appreciation of the similarity and differences of challenges faced by other medical education programmes. I also had a unique opportunity to see my own country through the eyes of people around the world. It is a very humbling experience.

·What is the most memorable moment for you at Duke-NUS?

There are so many memorable moments that it is hard to choose just one.

There are some funny anecdotes surrounding the differences in British English and American English. Early in my stay here, at a meeting, Prof Soo Khee Chee said something had put "a spanner in the works." I had never heard the word spanner and asked what it was. One of the administrators drew a picture – and I said: "oh a wrench!" And Prof Soo said: "When are you going to learn to speak English?!" For every similar phrase (like putting wrench in the works is same idea), there are some that are very different. For example – to Table a topic. In the US it means to postpone it (take it off the Table until later), where as here, it means to discuss now (Put on Table now). It has been fun learning the similarities and differences between the two. But now I can no longer spell. Center/Centre, Behavior/Behaviour, Program/Programme, etc...

·What's most memorable about the early batches? (Posed by an Alumnus)

The early batches were so brave and mature. They took a chance on a programme that was not fully fleshed out and had faith in themselves and (hopefully) us to make it happen. They also worked with us to make things better and supported each other to make sure they were successful. I particular remember a time when a team had a "blow-up." The staff came to tell me that a team walked out of class and asked me to check on them. What made me proud was that they said they didn't need my intervention – but that they would work it out, and they did.

·Looking back on the past 16 years at DukeNUS, what makes you feel most proud? (Posed by an Alumnus)

One of the things that make me most proud is the impact Duke-NUS has had on the medical education environment in Singapore, and in some way's broader education in Singapore. I feel we were the catalyst for many initiatives and/or improvements. Some of the things we established have been adopted in the other medical schools such as: White Coat Ceremony, Donor Memorial Services, Use of Standardized Patients (in both learning and assessment). And TeamLEAD (or a version of it) has led to not only a spin-off company (CognaLearn) and an impactful software package, but the strategy has been adapted in primary, secondary, other tertiary institutions as well as industry in Singapore and the region.

·DukeNUS has never been without your leadership. What are your hopes for Duke-NUS in this next chapter?

My hope is that the nature of the school is one in which the graduates will feel pride that they started their medical journey at Duke-NUS, will see the value of its different approaches, and advocate for it to continue for years to come.



Q&A WITH PROF SANDY COOK CONT'D

·Having lived in here for so many years, what have you found to be the most interesting/quirky thing about Singapore? (Posed by an Alumnus)

One quirky thing I noticed in my first year, when I rode the bus to school in the mornings, was that many of the aunties and uncles would come on the bus and smack the seats before they sat down. It was during hungry ghost month so I naively asked if they were making sure they were not sitting on a ghost. After people stopped laughing, I don't know if that thought was any more surprising than knowing they were trying to remove the heat so they didn't get "piles!"

·What will you miss the most about Singapore?

The people, the safety, the public transportation, the holidays, the warmth (especially during Nov-Feb), the care the government has for the people, in other words everything. Singapore's commitment to education and the faith people had in me to establish TeamLEAD, AMEI, faculty development environment has meant so much to me and allowed me to grow and develop as well.

·The alumni can't believe that you are leaving Duke-NUS. They want to know, What are your plans for the future? (Posed by an Alumnus)

I can't believe it either. My goal had been to stay in Singapore longer than I was at University of Chicago so I could say Singapore was where I spent the longest part of my working life 😊. That said, the past 2.5 years have been hard (for everyone) because of lack of travel and being away from family. Due to so many events that have occurred over the past 2.5 years, I came to greatly realize how important physical connection with family is. So, initially, I'm going to spend time seeing my family and friends I haven't been able to visit for what will be 2.5 years.

After that, it is a bit of an open set of opportunities. I may continue to teach, do some consulting, write...or maybe start acting in community theatre with my husband! Who knows!

·How would you like to be remembered?

Not just me, but I would hope that the many pioneer faculty and staff (who made the faculty look good) will always be recognized and remembered for having set the stage for this great "experiment." As brave as the students were, so were those who came (some ½ way around the world), to establish something unique and different. From the SRP concept rather than traditional basic science departments to the learning strategy – the inspiration, creativity, and boldness should always be celebrated.

Thank you Prof Sandy Cook!



EVENTS

DUKE-NUS MEDICAL ALUMNI ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021



Annual General Meeting (8th September 2021)

For the second consecutive year, Duke-NUS Medical Alumni (DNMA) Annual General Meeting took place virtually. Dean Thomas Coffman, Vice Dean Ian Curran and Mr Tony Chew were able to join us for the event and shared some important school and curriculum updates with our alumni. With it being DNMA's election year, we ushered in our new Duke-NUS Medical Alumni office-bearers and management committee with Anuradha Pandey '15 and Kenneth Chin '16 at the helm. We ended the session with a discussion of how alumni can be more involved in teaching and volunteering. We would like to give a big shout out to our outgoing president, Maverick Uy '13. Thank you so much for your time and dedication for two awesome terms! You can download the PDF with the list of office-bearers and management committee members [here](#).

Virtual Escape Room (29th October 2021)

This Halloween, we invited alumni and students (MD and PhD alike) to join us for a virtual escape room event. Eight teams raced to be the first to break the werewolf's curse and spent an hour and a half pouring over a handful of clues in order to find out which werewolf they had to face. In the end, KOPITeam, a team of PhD students, emerged victorious and secured the bounty offered for saving us all from the werewolf's attack.



Day of Service (Jurong Lake Gardens Clean-up)

On a Saturday morning (4th September 2021), staff members of the Duke-NUS Alumni Relations team made a trip to Jurong Lake Gardens and organised a clean-up operation with simple tools – plastic bags and tongs. Accompanied by a scenic view, the team spent a fruitful hour picking up every piece of trash they could find and reach. The haul included food packaging, cigarette buds, countless straws and lollipop sticks, and even though we were all sweaty and tired by the end of the hour-long clean-up, we found it an incredibly meaningful experience and look forward to planning a bigger operation in the near future.



Alumni Gatherings



As per previous years, we shared the wonderful news of the new residency matches with their seniors in the respective specialties. We encourage the seniors to have a meal together their classmates/juniors (we cover part of the bill too!) to get to know them better and help set them up for their residency training.

If you are interested to set up a gathering for your class/specialty, please feel free to reach out to us at alumni@duke-nus.edu.sg.

Alumni Movie Night (29th April 2022)



With the recent relaxation of the Safe Management Measures, we were really excited to organize our first big in-person event after two years. We did a screening of the third sequel to the Fantastic Beast Series and extended invitations to our graduating year 4 students, too. We were happy with the great turnout and had to place some guests on a waitlist. Although the theatre was packed many had to rush off before we took the photo after the screening. Please look out for the next Alumni social event soon.

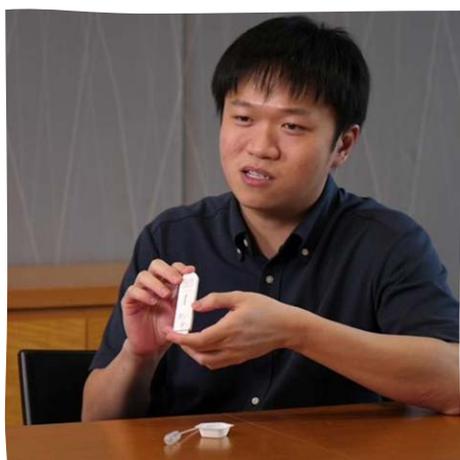
ALUMNI IN THE NEWS

Duke-NUS alumni tackle today's medical problems for tomorrow's better care



Our alumni, Cecilia Kwok '11, Karrie Ko '11, Maverick Uy '13, Shravan Verma '14 and Lim Gim Hui '20 were featured in the first MEDICUS issue for 2022 about how they took different paths and collectively tackled different medical problems. Read more about it here: <https://www.duke-nus.edu.sg/medicus/2022-issue1/duke-nus-alumni>

New COVID-19 saliva test a possible game changer for rapid screening



Our alumnus, Danny Tng '19, who is the lead inventor of the saliva test kit was featured and shared about the kit which has shown promise in early clinical testing, outperforming existing ARTs, with nearly comparable sensitivity to the gold standard Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test.

Read more about it here: <https://www.duke-nus.edu.sg/medicus/2022-issue1/new-covid19-saliva-test>

Educational Appointment in Duke-NUS Medical School

A/Prof Lai Siang Hui will be relinquishing his appointments as Course Director of Foundations of Patient Care I (formerly titled Molecules, Cells, & Tissues and Human Structure & Function); Phase I Lead; and Assistant Dean for Basic Science on 1 June 2022. We wish to thank A/Prof Lai for his invaluable contributions and passionate work in education and look forward to his continued efforts on behalf of the students of Duke-NUS Medical School.

We are delighted to announce that our alumnus, Ignasius Aditya Jappar '12, will be joining us as the Co-Course Director of Fundamentals of Patient Care I. Prior to this appointment, Dr Ignasius has served as a content expert in the Phase curriculum. We welcome him as a living exemplar of a successful Clinician Plus to our students and look forward to continuing to strengthen the Duke and Duke-NUS curriculum in Phase I.

Congratulations on your appointment Ignasius!



Graduation and Hooding Ceremony Class of 2022



We were really excited to be able to hold the Graduation and Hooding Ceremony for the Class of 2022 in person at the Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium in Academia on 28th May. Mr Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Education, was the Guest of Honour and Prof Tan Chorh Chuan, Chief Health Scientist, Ministry of Health was the keynote speaker. In his keynote address, Prof Tan mentioned Speedoc (founded by our alumnus Shравan Verma '14) as an excellent partnering organization in dealing with the pandemic and as a way that Duke-NUS graduates are transforming the practice of medicine. We were also heartened to have our alumna and DNMA committee member, Low Zhen Luan '21, present the graduating class.



Congratulations to our alumnus, Gao Qimeng '19, on receiving an American Society of Transplant Surgeons Foundation 2021 Jonathan P. Fryer Resident Scientist Scholarship for his research on gene therapy in solid organ transplant - "The Delivery of AAV Vector to Liver Allograft Using Ex Vivo Machine Perfusion System" Qimeng is currently a resident with the General Surgery Residency Program at Duke University School of Medicine. **We are always looking to celebrate the success of our alumni, if you or your classmates have received recognitions big or small, please reach out to us!**

Fin